

GOVERNOR HALEY BARBOUR CALLS SPECIAL SESSION FOR MAY 18

State Budget, Momentum Mississippi, MCI Settlement Issues to be Addressed

(Jackson, Miss.) - Governor Haley Barbour today called a Special Session for Wednesday, May 18, at 1:00 p.m., to address the state budget and other timely issues. A detailed Special Session call will be issued tomorrow.

"With new tax revenue now identified, the Legislature should take this Special Session opportunity to act quickly and pass an honest budget for Mississippi," said Governor Haley Barbour. "In addition to the budget, there are several key issues that need to be addressed before the Legislative convenes again in 2006."

The Governor presented his own revised '06 budget proposal to lawmakers yesterday in preparation of the upcoming Special Session - including an additional \$38 million for K-12 education. The 2005 Regular Session ended last month without lawmakers agreeing on a budget for the upcoming 2006 fiscal year that begins July 1.

Momentum Mississippi - the \$24 million economic development package organized by business leaders from across the state - will be one of the items considered by lawmakers. "In order to remain competitive for high tech jobs and to encourage industrial expansions here at home, Momentum Mississippi must be enacted now," said Governor Barbour.

With the recent announcement of the state's settlement in the tax fraud case with MCI, Governor Barbour will be including legislation relating to the settlement in the Special Session call. Lawmakers will consider bills to use

the \$100 million settlement to repay the Mississippi Department of Transportation for funds diverted from the agency in recent years and to pay off the states debt for the Mississippi Beef Processors Plant as an alternative to paying bond interest on the project. "It is important to remember that this settlement money is one-time money that should not be used for recurring expenses," said Governor Barbour. "We should pay back the money originally owed to Mississippi's transportation needs, and we can rid the state of the beef plant debacle without having to pay millions of dollars in bond interest in the future," he added.

In addition, Governor Barbour will offer legislation already used in other states like Virginia, Kansas and Texas that requires public scrutiny and legislative approval whenever a compensation contract is entered into between the state and a private attorney in cases over \$1 million.

Other items that will be addressed in the Special Session include:

- Appropriating funds for FY 05 deficit spending among several state agencies;
- Several state bond needs;
- Reauthorizing the state's no-call telemarketing law as overseen by the Public Service Commission;
- Creating a Military Family Relief Fund that will provide grants to Mississippi families that experience a financial burden due to active military service;
- Reviving Senate Bill 2471 which protects vulnerable adults from abuse. (Governor Barbour vetoed this bill last month due to language that established a new and duplicative program within the Attorney General's office that already exists within the Mississippi

Department of Human Services therefore causing unnecessary administrative costs); and

- Allowing the Pearl River County Prison to house inmates securely at the least possible cost to taxpayers, as other private prisons in Mississippi have done.

“We have a lot of work to do on behalf of the citizens of Mississippi,” said Governor Barbour. “I look forward to working with the Legislature, and I am confident that the Legislature is ready to tackle these issues in a timely fashion.”

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